

IN THE CLAIMS

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Claims 1-20 (canceled)

Claim 13 (currently amended) A method for preparing bisphenol A, comprising the following steps:

transferring phenol and acetone into a reaction zone charged with condensation catalyst, obtaining a stream containing bisphenol A after reaction;

transferring the obtained stream containing bisphenol A into a rectification zone, obtaining a product fraction primarily containing bisphenol A and phenol; and

transferring the product fraction primarily containing bisphenol A and phenol into a crystallization zone to obtain a bisphenol A product;

~~characterized in that a~~ wherein a water-depleted fraction primarily containing phenol, bisphenol A and acetone and having a water content that is controlled at a level of not greater than 2% by weight is obtained from the rectification zone, and said water-depleted fraction is cooled and returned as a cycled stream to the reaction zone.

Claim 14 (canceled).

Claim 15 (currently amended) The method according to claim 13, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein said reaction zone is an adiabatic fixed bed reactor comprising one adiabatic fixed bed reactor or two or more adiabatic fixed bed reactors arranged in

series.

Claim 16 (currently amended) The method according to claim 15, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein when said reaction zone comprises two or more adiabatic fixed bed reactors arranged in series, the water-depleted fraction primarily containing phenol, bisphenol A and acetone is returned to any one of the reactors or to each reactor proportionally.

Claim 17 (currently amended) The method according to claim 16, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein when said reaction zone comprises two or more adiabatic fixed bed reactors arranged in series, the water-depleted fraction primarily containing phenol, bisphenol A and acetone is returned to the last reactor only.

Claim 18 (currently amended) The method according to claim 16, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the weight ratio of the cycled flow rate of said water-depleted fraction primarily containing phenol, bisphenol A and acetone to the flow rate of the feed stream to the reactor, into which said water-depleted fraction enters, is in the range from 5:1 to 15:1.

Claim 19 (currently amended) The method according to claim 17, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the weight ratio of the cycled flow rate of said water-depleted fraction primarily containing phenol, bisphenol A and acetone to the flow rate of the feed stream to the reactor, into which said water-depleted fraction enters, is in the range from 5:1 to 15:1.

Claim 20 (currently amended) The method according to claim 13, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein said rectification zone is a rectification column, the water-depleted fraction primarily containing phenol, bisphenol A and acetone is a side draw of said rectification column, and a product fraction primarily containing bisphenol A and phenol is discharged from the bottom of said rectification column.

Claim 21 (currently amended) The method according to claim 20, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the operation pressure of said rectification column is in the range of 50-800mmHg (absolute pressure).

Claim 22 (canceled)

Claim 23 (currently amended) The method according to claim 17, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein said rectification zone is a rectification column, the water-depleted fraction primarily containing phenol, bisphenol A and acetone is a side draw of said rectification column, and a product fraction primarily containing bisphenol A and phenol is discharged from the bottom of said rectification column.

Claim 24 (currently amended) The method according to claim 13, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein said rectification zone is composed of a flash drum and a rectification column, the bisphenol A-containing stream from the reaction zone is transferred into the flash drum, a water-depleted fraction primarily containing phenol, bisphenol A and acetone is discharged from the bottom of the flash drum, part of said water-depleted fraction is cycled back to the reaction zone, the residual part is transferred into the

rectification column, and a product fraction primarily containing bisphenol A and phenol is discharged from the bottom of said rectification column.

Claim 25 (currently amended) The method according to claim 24, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the operation pressure of said flash drum in the rectification zone is in the range of 50-800mmHg (absolute pressure).

Claim 26 (canceled)

Claim 27 (currently amended) The method according to claim 17, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein said rectification zone is composed of a flash drum and a rectification column, the bisphenol A-containing stream from the reaction zone is transferred into the flash drum, a water-depleted fraction primarily containing phenol, bisphenol A and acetone is discharged from the bottom of the flash drum, part of said water-depleted fraction is cycled back to the reaction zone, the residual part is transferred into the rectification column, and a product fraction primarily containing bisphenol A and phenol is discharged from the bottom of said rectification column.

Claim 28 (currently amended) The method according to claim 13, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the molar ratio of phenol to acetone in said reaction zone is in the range from 3:1 to 30:1, the condensation temperature in said reaction zone is in the range of 50-130°C, and the condensation pressure is from atmosphere to 6kg/cm² (gage pressure).

Claim 29 (canceled)

Claim 30 (currently amended) The method according to claim 17, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the molar ratio of phenol to acetone in said reaction zone is in the range from 3:1 to 30:1, the condensation temperature in said reaction zone is in the range of 50-130°C, and the condensation pressure is from atmosphere to 6kg/cm² (gage pressure).

Claim 31 (currently amended) The method according to claim 13, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein in the crystallization zone the crystallization is carried out once only.

Claim 32 (currently amended) The method according to claim 17, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein in the crystallization zone the crystallization is carried out once only.